

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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TAGS: EAIR, IT

SUBJECT: CIVAIR - PAA REFUSED IN-FLIGHT CATERING SERVICE AT
ROME/FIUMICINO AIRPORT

REF: ROME 1605

1. SUMMARY: ALITALIA CATERING SUBSIDIARY SERN RESUMED IN-FLIGHT MEAL SERVICE TO PAA ON FEBRUARY 3, FOLLOWING EXTENDED FEBRUARY 2 MEETING INVOLVING SEARN, ROME AIRPORTS AUTHORITY (SOCIETA AEROPORTI DI ROMA -- SAR), TRADE UNIONS AT ROME/FIUMICINO AIRPORT, ALITALIA, AND GOI REPS. SUSPENSION OF IN-FLIGHT MEAL SERVICE, HOWEVER, MAY BE EXTENDED TO ALL CARRIERS FROM TIME TO TIME IN FUTURE IF UNDERLYING ISSUES NOT RESOLVED. END SUMMARY.

2. PAA UNABLE OBTAIN PREVIOUSLY CONTRACTED FOR IN-FLIGHT MEALS FROM SOLE CATERING CONCESSIONAIRE AT ROME/FIUMICINO AIRPORT, SEARN (OWNED 60 PERCENT BY ALITALIA), FROM JANUARY 27 THROUGH FEBRUARY 2 FOR REASONS NOTED REFTTEL. DURING THIS PERIOD SEARN PERSONNEL REFUSED TO TURN OVER IN-FLIGHT MEALS TO SAR PERSONNEL FOR TRANSPORT TO AIRCRAFT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH MAGISTRATE'S "TEMPORARY" DECISION IN CASE BROUGHT BY PAA, SAR WAS REQUIRED TO ACCEPT ABOUT 20 PAA FOOD-SERVICE EMPLOYEES ON JANUARY 24

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AND SAR WAS DIRECTED TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRANS-

PORTING IN-FLIGHT MEALS PREPARED BY SEARN TO ALITALIA AND PAA, BUT NOT RPT NOT OTHER AIRLINES. DURING "BOYCOTT" BY SEARN, ALITALIA ALSO REFUSED IN-FLIGHT MEALS ON JANUARY 29; HOWEVER, ALITALIA SERVICE RESTORED BY SEARN ON JANUARY 30.

3. LOCAL PAA REP REQUESTED USG INTERVENTION ON MORNING OF FEBRUARY 2 ON BASIS SEARN ACTION WAS BREACH OF CONTRACT, WAS CLEARLY DISCRIMINATORY, AND WAS DELAYING PAA FLIGHT OPERATIONS THROUGH ROME. EMBOFF IMMEDIATELY TELEPHONED DR. COLLINI (CHIEF OF CABINET, MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT), WHO IN TURN DISCUSSED SITUATION WITH SAR MANAGING DIRECTOR POSTIGLIONE AND MINISTRY TRANSPORT UNDERSECRETARY DEGAN (WHO HAS USEFUL POLITICAL CONTACTS). COLLINI FULLY UNDERSTOOD IMPLICATIONS OF BOYCOTT FOR FORTHCOMING CIVAIR CONSULTATIONS. EMBOFF ADVISED LOCAL PAA REP TO CONTACT ALITALIA MANAGING DIRECTOR SERENA DIRECTLY TO SEEK ALITALIA COOPERATION IN RESOLVING SITUATION, WHICH HE DID. EMBOFF ALSO CONTACTED SAR OPERATIONS MANAGER MAUGERI FOR COMPLETE REVIEW OF SITUATION, CALLING ATTENTION TO DE FACTO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST US CARRIER WHICH WOULD REQUIRE FORMAL USG INTERVENTION WITH GOI IF BOYCOTT NOT ENDED IMMEDIATELY.

4. AT EXTENDED FEBRUARY 2 AFTERNOON/EVENING MEETING OF SEARN, SAR, FULAT (JOINT CIVAIR UNIONS -- CGIL, CISL AND UIL -- GROUP), ALITALIA AND GOI REPS, UNIONS AGREED TO ACCEPT MAGISTRATE'S "TEMPORARY" DECISION AND TO END BOYCOTT OF PAA. THERE WILL BE 3-HOUR STRIKE BY SAR AND SEARN EMPLOYEES ON FEBRUARY 5 (0900-1200) TO PRESSURE GOI TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SAR, SEARN AND ALITALIA UNDER LAW 755, WITH POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE STRIKES IF "ACCEPTABLE" SOLUTION NOT FORTHCOMING. FUTURE LABOR ACTION WILL AFFECT ALL CARRIERS, NOT JUST PAA AND/OR ALITALIA, IN ORDER TO AVOID CHARGES OF DISCRIMINATION AND TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON GOI.

5. COMMENT. ENDING OF SEARN BOYCOTT OF PAA MAY BE PYRRHIC VICTORY; INSTEAD OF ONE CARRIER BEING DENIED IN-FLIGHT MEALS ALL CARRIERS WILL BE AFFECTED IN CASE OF FUTURE LABOR ACTION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OVER THIS ISSUE. EMBASSY DOUBTS THAT FIUMICINO AIRPORT MANAGER CASAGRANDE WOULD BE WILLING ISSUE AIRPORT ORDINANCE TO ENFORCE EITHER "TEMPORARY" OR "FINAL" DECISION OF THE COURT, SINCE HE USUALLY KEEPS VERY LOW PROFILE WHERE UNIONS ARE INVOLVED. ALSO, IN VIEW OF POLITICAL SITUATION GOI WOULD PRESUMABLY PREFER NOT TO HAVE TO INTERVENE IN WHAT IS BASICALLY A DISPUTE BETWEEN RIVAL UNIONS AT FIUMICINO AIRPORT. CONSEQUENTLY, EMBASSY BELIEVES THERE IS GOOD

CHANCE OF CONTINUED STRIKES AFFECTING NOT ONLY IN-FLIGHT
CATERING BUT OTHER GROUND SERVICES AT FIUMICINO AIRPORT.
ALTHOUGH JANUARY 27-FEBRUARY 2 BOYCOTT OF PAA BY SEARN
CONSITUTED DE FACTO DISCRIMINATION, EMBASSY BELIEVES THIS
RESULTED FROM CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND CONTROL OF ALITALIA
AND/OR GOI (ALTHOUGH ALITALIA NOT NECESSARILY DISPLEASED
WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT, WHICH ENCOURAGED PASSENGERS TO SHIFT
TO OTHER CARRIERS INCLUDING ALITALIAL). NENVERTHELESS,
EMBASSY BELIEVES ISSUE SHOULD BE RAISED AT FORTHCOMING
USG-GOI CIVIAR CONSULTATIONS AS EXAMPLE OF DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST US CARRIERS AT ROME AIRPORTS.VOLPE

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